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Chairman: Mr. Mackay ..... (New Zealand)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Kuznetsov

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Organization of work

1. **The Chairman** recalled that at its 1st meeting of the current session the Committee had asked the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), which had failed to issue certain documents, to explain why documentation necessary for its work had been issued either late or not at all. That was a troubling situation, and ways must be found to speed up the issuance of documents not yet issued for the current session, and to ensure that documents for the sixtieth session were made available in a timely manner. The Bureau of the Committee, which would be looking into the issue, intended to make proposals aimed at ensuring that a similar situation did not occur at the sixtieth session.

2. **Ms. McCreery** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management) said that of the 10 reports to be submitted by her Office four had already been issued and two others had been sent to the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management by the designated deadline. The report on the use of gratis personnel, which was issued every two years, would be submitted at the resumed fifty-ninth session, so that data available at 31 December could be included. The report on human resources management, with its addendum on proposals for new contractual arrangements, had been submitted four days after the designated slot and would be issued on 8 October 2004. The report on the composition of the Secretariat, which had been submitted one month late in order to incorporate data for the first half of the current year, was due to appear on 6 October, and the report on proposals to improve gender distribution in the Secretariat, which had not been given a designated slot, would be available on 15 October.

3. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the documents for which his Department was responsible (programme budget proposals, proposed strategic framework, biennial programme plan of the Organization, programme-budget performance report, etc.) were already available or would be available at the resumed session (in the case of reports on the budgets of peacekeeping operations and their implementation), together with the corresponding reports of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). However, in addition to that category of documents, there was a whole series of unscheduled reports deriving from new decisions taken by the legislative bodies, especially the Security Council. Thus, no fewer than five reports presenting revised budgets for peacekeeping operations in Timor-Leste, Haiti, Burundi, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire — whose mandates had been changed — would be submitted to the Committee during the current session. Strictly speaking, those reports had not been submitted late, because they represented responses to new requests of the Council. That would also be the case with the budget estimates for the operations of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose mandate had recently been extended. Budget estimates had also been submitted to ACABQ with respect to activities concerning weapons of mass destruction, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the United Nations Observer Mission in Bougainville and, subject to a decision to be taken by the Security Council, the Sudan. Furthermore, pursuant to requests made during the resumed fifty-eighth session, the Committee would have before it a report on the financial implications of support for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and a report on the financial aspects of security measures.

4. In order to be able to respond effectively to those unforeseen requests, the Programme Planning and Budget Division was constantly obliged to modify its programme of work and sometimes had to postpone the issuing of certain reports in order to speed up the issuing of reports requested by the Security Council. Despite those difficulties, more than 80 reports would be submitted to the Committee by the end of 2004.

5. Furthermore, unlike the other Main Committees, the Fifth Committee met not only during the autumn, but also at the beginning of the year and in the spring, at the resumed session, and amended its programme of work on each occasion. Thus, even though the system of designating slots for the submission of documents represented an improvement, it did not take sufficient account of realities on the ground. If it was to meet the requirements of the Fifth Committee, the system would need to be adjusted and certainly could not be implemented on a systematic basis.

6. **Mr. Clarkson** (Officer-in-Charge of the Capital Master Plan) said that one of the key aspects of the

report on the Capital Master Plan concerned the possibilities of new financing by the host State. The most recent proposals on that subject had been received on 20 September and had immediately been reflected in the report, the final version of which had been adopted by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, and the Office for the Capital Master Plan.

7. **Ms. Mabutas** (Director, Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management) said that the reports for which her Department was responsible depended for a large part on the production of other reports. Thus, the annual report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) could be prepared only after the Unit had received the information requested from the entities audited. In the current year, the four agencies audited by JIU had been invited to submit their comments in June. The last responses had been received on 19 August and the Department of Management had submitted the final report for translation and publication on 19 September.

8. With respect to the report of the Secretary-General on the two reports of the Board of Auditors (concerning the United Nations and the 14 funds and programmes, respectively), which the Department had received in mid-July, it had been necessary to wait for the responses to requests for observations made to the various bodies and agencies concerned, with the result that it had not been possible to prepare the report of the Secretary-General until 1 September.

9. Her Department had begun preparing the report on the administration of justice only after having received the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the examination of appeals procedures and had completed its report at the end of September. However, the report of the Secretary-General concerning the Panel of Discrimination and Other Grievances had been prepared without waiting for the conclusions of OIOS and would be submitted shortly.

10. **Ms. Azarias** (Office of Internal Oversight Services) acknowledged the difficulties caused by the late appearance of reports, as well as her Office's share of the responsibility in certain cases. It must be borne in mind, however, that her Office had to engage in genuine dialogue with its clients, which must be given sufficient time (often between four and six weeks) to respond to its requests. The survey on the administration of justice had required several months of consultations, hence the delay in issuing the corresponding report.

11. Moreover, it sometimes transpired that, however intense the negotiations, certain problems and differences of view persisted. As yet, there was no mechanism for resolving them (her Office had made a proposal in that regard in its last report). It would also be necessary to train a larger group of specialists, in order to be able to follow up simultaneously on all the requests of the General Assembly. For its part, the Office was undertaking a detailed analysis of the problems encountered in the issuance of its reports, of which there had been a record number in 2004. Four of those reports, out of a total of 12, had already been issued, and all the others had been submitted to DGACM.

12. **Ms. Kane** (Assistant Secretary-General for Conference Management) said that the timely availability of pre-session documentation depended on three factors: drafting, processing in the six official languages of the Organization, and date of consideration by the intergovernmental body concerned. The author department was responsible for drafting, clearance and submission. DGACM oversaw the various stages of processing, and the secretariat of the intergovernmental body, which was the end-user, set the date of consideration. Those three parties cooperated, within the framework of the slotting system, on the submission of documents. The essential tools for managing the process were the list of session documents and the draft programme of work. The availability of documents depended on those three factors, which must be evaluated both separately and together, with a view to determining how best to rectify the problems that would inevitably occur.

13. The list of documents requested and the draft programme of work for the session were the starting point. They were discussed with the committee secretariat; then the Department's workload was evaluated and a schedule for the submission of manuscripts, or a slot date for each report, was established. Given the rules for the issuance of documents (six weeks prior to consideration) and the time required to process them (about four weeks, both in theory and in practice), author departments were expected to submit their texts about 10 weeks prior to the date of consideration. There were some exceptions: for example, reports of subsidiary bodies (such as the

Committee on Conferences) had to be submitted immediately after the conclusion of their work. Also, at times, the Department tried to reduce the processing time to four weeks.

14. The Department determined its staffing requirements on the basis of the estimated volume of work. The slotting system applied to the most manageable portion of the documentation, since it covered reports prepared by the Secretariat in response to requests from intergovernmental bodies, which represented around 40 per cent of the workload. The remaining 60 per cent included communications from Member States, draft reports of bodies that were in session, and urgent, unforeseen and often high-priority documents, such as those requested by the Security Council. Obviously, such documents were much less predictable in both timing and quantity.

15. In processing those documents, the Department prepared forecasts based on past experience. It then determined its staffing requirements. However, the estimates were not always correct. If there was more work than expected, other documents had to be postponed in order to complete unforeseen work, the output remaining more or less constant. Thus, one week earlier, four Member States had submitted a 75-page communication, requesting its immediate circulation. During the summer, the Department had received an urgent 200-page document from the International Court of Justice addressed to the Security Council. The Darfur report was another example; in that case, resources for processing the reports of the Board of Auditors (which had been translated outside the Organization in the past, but to the detriment of their quality) had had to be reassigned.

16. The foregoing examples illustrated the dynamic nature of document processing. Nevertheless, some assumptions had to be made well in advance in order to plan the use of available resources. The draft programmes of work were established very early (six to nine months before each session). However, the Fifth Committee had held two resumed sessions after the General Assembly's programme of work had been established, during which it had requested new documents. In June, it had also requested reports on peacekeeping operations. All those changes had had an impact on the volume of work and, as a result, the timeliness of submission. The need for up-to-date information might have had the effect of negating some of the advance planning measures for documentation.

17. However, there were solutions. If it was apparent that the workload — in terms of drafting or processing — could not be completed before the beginning of the session, the possibility of adjusting the time of consideration should be weighed. That, to a large extent, had been the case with the documentation for the Fifth Committee at the current session. Thus, for example, the Department knew that the reports of the Board of Auditors (which represented almost 2,000 pages and were difficult to process) would not be submitted until the end of July, although the Committee had to consider them in early October, and that their processing by the Organization's translation services required at least two months (slightly more if the work was contracted out). Accordingly, under the current scheduling, documentation for that agenda item was inevitably late. In 2002, the reports of the Board of Auditors had been submitted two weeks earlier, had been 500 pages shorter and had all been issued by 8 October; in other words, on the date established for the current session.

18. The reports of ACABQ also had an important impact on the timely availability of documentation. For various reasons, those reports could only be submitted to the Department relatively late in relation to the dates on which the Committee would consider them. They were usually submitted during the session, and that made the planning and management of the workload problematic. In practice, a pre-session report submitted late would not be processed before documents submitted on time, so as not to penalize the authors of the latter. However, priority had always been given to reports emanating from meetings in progress — or in-session documents — which were not slotted. The Department planned and programmed the ACABQ reports as in-session documents. In 2004, owing to schedule adjustments, the reports of ACABQ on many agenda items would be submitted later in the session.

19. In the case of some items, problems arose after documents had been submitted to the Department; inconsistencies had to be clarified during processing. Sometimes, the author department asked the Department to interrupt its work while they revisited some elements of the report. During 2004, work had been suspended in the case of several documents from the Office of Human Resources Management and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).

20. Compared with previous years, compliance with the deadlines set for General Assembly documentation

had decreased. The submission compliance ratio for the Fifth Committee at the fifty-ninth session was 56 per cent, compared with 80 per cent at the same stage of the previous session. Changes in the system could explain that difference. For example, the Department no longer adjusted projected submission dates or slots; rather it based its analysis on the originally projected schedule, which was the basis for advance planning.

21. The Department had a dual function. It was entirely responsible for all stages of processing, until the document appeared in the six official languages; and it was the only point in the system able to exercise oversight. In fact, since it was the ultimate gatekeeper for timely issuance, its oversight and coordination functions were mandatory. All the documents for all the intergovernmental bodies, drafted by all parts of the Secretariat converged in it. It had to process documentation for one body without unduly disrupting the work of another. Accordingly, she would be chairing an interdepartmental task force composed of her peers throughout the Secretariat in order to organize a coordinated approach capable of producing continuous improvement in that area.

22. In servicing the sessions of the General Assembly, the Secretariat generally produced approximately 14,000 pages of documentation, of which 5,000 pages were for the Fifth Committee alone. During the three previous years, it had issued between 7,000 and 8,000 pages by the current stage of the session. In the case of the Fifth Committee at the end of September, the output had amounted to approximately 2,000 pages in 2002, 3,000 pages in 2003 and 2,000 pages in 2004. The Department expected to issue close to 1,000 pages the following week, which meant that, in terms of pages, the output was relatively constant, although, in terms of documents, it had decreased slightly. During the fifty-eighth session, 82 reports had been published by end-September, compared with 63 at the current session. The priority given to processing the 2,000 pages of the Board of Auditors appeared to explain the decrease in the number of documents available at the start of the session.

23. The Department's reform had been under way for more than three years. Fundamental changes had been introduced in an attempt to bring order to activities which, because of the political nature of the Organization's work and its impredictability, did not lend themselves to strict rationalization; yet, if care were not taken, could rapidly spin out of control, as had occurred in the past. In the context of the reform, the Department had been treading a fine line between complete chaos and perfect control of operations, by overprogramming resources to take into account the fact that planning would, on occasion, have to be set aside in the higher interests of the Organization.

24. **The Chairman** observed that, even though the number of pages had remained constant, compliance with deadlines had decreased. He hoped that the task force chaired by Ms. Kane would look into any modifications that could be made to the slotting system.

25. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) said that the efficiency of the Committee's work depended to a large extent on the timely availability of documents. She had noted the explanations provided by the Secretariat, particularly with regard to the unpredictable nature of the documentation requested by the Security Council. However, those explanations suggested that it was impossible to change the current situation. The current system should therefore be examined, particularly with regard to the issue of capacity, which the Secretariat had not mentioned. The Secretariat should be granted all the resources, both human and financial, needed to carry out its mandate, if only because that was a fundamental budgetary principle. It would be appreciated if members of the Committee could receive a copy of the statement of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, which would also be useful when the agenda item on the pattern of conferences was taken up.

26. **Mr. Mazumdar** (India) said that delays in the issuance of documentation could not be attributed to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management alone; moreover, the author departments were also dependent on information from other entities. He emphasized that if the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) was unable to enforce respect for deadlines, it was to be feared that no other body could. Although his delegation was among those that opposed micromanagement, it considered that it might be necessary for the Committee to examine more closely the question of late issuance of documentation. The problem appeared to arise from a lack of coordination between departments, to the extent that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management was, at times, unaware that certain reports had been requested. It also appeared that the

slotting system was too rigid and did not make allowances for dealing with a sudden increase in the number of reports requested or for processing reports prepared in response to specific circumstances. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the author departments and the Committee should coordinate their activities more closely. Moreover, perhaps the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management should keep in reserve the means for issuing documents that were subject to strict deadlines because of the nature of the problems they dealt with, such as reports on matters before the Security Council.

27. **Mr. Al-Ansari** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, acknowledged the validity of the justifications presented by the representatives of the Secretariat, but considered that the problem of late issuance of documentation could be resolved. In that regard, the General Assembly should consider taking fresh measures so that the author departments and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management could ensure that the documents requested were issued on time. The Committee could also recommend measures to ensure that responsibilities were clearly established.

28. **Mr. Eljy** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed concern at the delays in the issuance of some documents, particularly those relating to the Office of Human Resources Management, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the administration of justice, as a result of which the Committee had been forced to postpone the consideration of some items. Despite the assurances of the Secretary-General that some of the documents would be ready in the spring of 2004, the documents in question had still not been issued. His delegation had taken note of the laudable efforts of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, to respect the established deadlines, and considered that some delays could have been avoided if the author departments had prepared the requested documents in time. In order to resolve the problem of late issuance of documents, the slotting system should be revised and a system of responsibilities should be established. Like the representative of Cuba, he considered that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management should be provided with the necessary financial resources.

29. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) shared the opinion of the Controller and other speakers who had said that the slotting system was too rigid and was not responsive to the needs. That conclusion had already been reached by the members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, which Nigeria chaired.

30. **Mr. Ramlal** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that delays in the issuance of documentation impeded the Committee in the carrying out of its mandate. One of the proposals put forward to avoid a recurrence of the situation was that the Committee should limit the number of reports it requested. However, his delegation considered that any decision to reduce the number of reports should be taken with caution, since some requests were justified because Member States needed additional elements in order to reach decisions on the matters before them.

31. His delegation would like more open dialogue to be instituted between the Secretariat and the Member States. In the past, the Committee had discussed how it could keep in touch with author departments and follow up on the status of documentation and the implementation of General Assembly resolutions and decisions. His delegation was not sure whether the Secretariat, which was responsible for ensuring that requested reports were ready on time, had called the attention of the Bureau of the Committee to the difficulties encountered in that regard. The time had perhaps come to establish or re-establish an informal liaison mechanism between the Bureau and the Secretariat, especially as the General Assembly was particularly concerned to revitalize its work.

32. **The Chairman** said that before the start of the Committee's work he had raised the question of documentation with representatives of the Secretariat, including Mr. Chen, the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, and that since then both the Secretariat and the members of the Bureau had endeavoured to speed up the issuance of documents. The question would of course have to be taken up later, in parallel with the Secretariat's review.

33. **Mr. Kramer** (Canada) said that the statement by Ms. Kane had enabled the Committee to familiarize itself with the slotting system and to understand why documents had not been issued within the deadlines. Although the existing system was clearly imperfect, it would be premature to do away with it as long as alternative solutions to reduce the margin of

unpredictability affecting many documents were still being sought. Canada also hoped that delegations would be kept up to date with the progress of the work of the task force to be chaired by Ms. Kane.

34. **The Chairman** said that, at the request of Cuba, Ms. Kane's statement would be circulated as an information document. The Bureau would also keep in touch with Ms. Kane and report back to Member States on the findings of the work of the task force, the aim being to ensure that documents were available in good time despite the difficulties encountered by the Secretariat. He hoped that the situation would improve in 2005.

35. He drew the Committee's attention to the revised programme of work for the first two weeks, which took account of the proposals made by delegations, and said that a new paper on the status of documentation would be issued shortly under symbol A/C.5/59/L.1/Rev.1.

36. **Mr. Renault** (Brazil) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and supported the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions on the requests for exemption under Article 19 from Burundi, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Niger, Central African Republic, Republic of Moldova, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and Tajikistan.

37. The Rio Group wished to comment on some questions which it considered to be of particular importance in the Committee's work. With regard to the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, the Group believed that the Committee should proceed with utmost rigour and that all the implications of draft resolutions on the programme budget should be examined simultaneously and dealt with in one and the same resolution. Where human resources management was concerned, the recruitment and promotion system must be fair and equitable, the geographical distribution balanced, and gender parity respected system-wide. The terms of employment of staff members must be appropriate and their personal security improved. A transparent system for the delegation of authority must be introduced, together with appropriate accountability arrangements. And the administration of justice must be more effective.

38. The Rio Group hoped that the decisions which the General Assembly would take regarding the Joint Inspection Unit would reinforce the collective responsibility of the Unit's members so that the reform would be effective and make its work more efficient. The Group welcomed the efforts made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which, like the Fifth Committee itself, tried to ensure that resources were managed more efficiently and that any irregularities were corrected.

39. The Rio Group undertook to do everything within its power to ensure that the requests for resources for peacekeeping operations were approved in October. When the Committee took up that matter, the Group would argue for a number of general rules to be respected. For example, there should be no discrimination in the application of the financial and administrative rules. And United Nations missions should discharge their mandates efficiently and make best use of the resources furnished to them.

40. The Rio Group noted that yet again a large number of documents had not been issued within the deadlines. It sincerely hoped that a solution would be found in 2005 for a problem which constituted a big obstacle to the full participation of the Group's members in the work of the Committee.

41. **The Chairman** said that, since delegations had no objections to the programme of work for the first two weeks, he would take it that the Committee adopted the programme, it being understood that the Bureau would make adjustments as and when necessary.

Agenda item 113: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/C.5/58/40)

42. **Mr. Al-Ansari** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it was extremely important for the Organization to stand on a sound and predictable financial base and for Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and unconditionally in accordance with Article 17 of the Charter. However, the Group of 77 and China had always been inclined to consider sympathetically requests for exemption under Article 19 of the Charter when Member States could not meet their financial commitments owing to socio-economic or political circumstances beyond their control. They had therefore examined carefully the requests from Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Niger, Republic of Moldova, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and Tajikistan and they endorsed the

recommendation of the Committee on Contributions that those Member States should retain the right to vote until 30 June 2005.

43. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, endorsed the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that Member States had a duty to discharge their financial obligations to the Organization in full, on time and unconditionally in accordance with Article 17 of the Charter. The Group of African States believed that the Fifth Committee should endorse the recommendation of the Committee on Contributions concerning the requests for exemption under Article 19 of the Charter and authorize the Member States concerned to retain the right to vote until 30 June 2005 since the circumstances giving rise to the requests were beyond their control. The Group also hoped that the Committee on Contributions would refrain in future from offering comments which might be regarded as value judgements: multi-year payment plans were purely voluntary, and exemptions under Article 19 should be granted solely on the basis of an individual country's merits. The Group drew attention in that regard to the fact that the international community had not always done as much as it might have done to help the Member States in question and invited it to honour its commitments.

44. **Mr. Adamia** (Georgia) said it was a matter for surprise that his country should be deprived of the right to vote at a time when it had recently made a bigger contribution to the Organization's budget than it had undertaken to make under its multi-year payment plan and had even managed for the first time to discharge its financial obligations to the Organization in full. The problem was due to the fact that, for reasons beyond its control, Georgia had been unable to follow the relevant procedures and submit the necessary information to the Committee on Contributions within the deadlines. The Rose Revolution which had swept through Georgia in 2003 had led to a change of Government and to major reforms. Georgia had had to deal with corruption and cope with many problems in several parts of its territory, and the confusion which had reigned for a time had prevented the competent bodies from following the rules and procedures imposed by the Organization. Georgia hoped that the Committee would consider its case with sympathy and authorize it once again to take a full part in the work of the United Nations.

45. **Mr. Eljy** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and stressed that Member States must discharge their financial obligations in full, on time and unconditionally. It would consider sympathetically the requests for exemption under Article 19. With regard to the tone of its report, the Committee on Contributions should not exceed its terms of reference by seeking to impose conditions on other legislative bodies.

46. **Mr. Ramlal** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He emphasized that the expenses of the Organization should be borne by the Member States, which should pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions. It was important, however, to give sympathetic consideration to the situation of countries facing socio-economic or political difficulties. His delegation therefore supported the recommendation of the Committee on Contributions that exemptions should be granted to the 10 countries that had requested them and that they should be permitted to vote until 30 June 2005. Noting the observations of the Committee on Contributions concerning the nature and quality of the information provided in support of the requests for exemption, he called on Member States to provide the fullest possible information, as the General Assembly had urged them in its resolution 54/237 C. He noted with satisfaction that the requests for exemption had been submitted in sufficient time for the Committee on Contributions to give them in-depth consideration.

47. His delegation deplored the fact that the Committee on Contributions had virtually made the submission of requests for exemption under Article 19 conditional on the establishment of a multi-year payment plan, judging by the slippage that had occurred between the formulation of paragraph 62 of the Committee's report on its activities at its sixty-third session (A/58/11) and that of paragraph 38 of its report on its activities at its sixty-fourth session (A/59/11), in which Member States were no longer encouraged to consider presenting a payment plan if they were in a position to do so but to submit one, when possible. It wished to caution the Committee on Contributions against any desire it might have to link the submission of payment plans to other measures, which would run counter to the position advocated by the Group of 77

and China on numerous occasions and to the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee on Contributions, endorsed by the General Assembly in paragraph 1 of its resolution 57/4 B, that due consideration should be given to the economic position of Member States, as not all of them might be in a position to submit payment plans, and that payment plans should remain voluntary and should not be automatically linked to other measures. His delegation wished to reaffirm the importance it attached to the role of the General Assembly with respect to the application of Article 19 and to the advisory role of the Committee on Contributions in accordance with article 160 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

48. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) said that her delegation aligned itself fully with the statements made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the representatives of Nigeria, the Syrian Arab Republic and Trinidad and Tobago. While she supported the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions concerning the requests for exemption under Article 19, she believed that consideration of such requests should not be linked to the submission of multi-year payment plans. The Committee on Contributions should be wary of making comments, in its conclusions, that seemed to constitute value judgements about the conduct of some Member States. That was not among the prerogatives of an expert body.

49. **Mr. Abbas** (Pakistan) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Committee should accede to the requests for exemption under Article 19, taking into account the precarious socio-economic situations in the countries that had submitted them. Those countries should nevertheless settle their arrears and submit multi-year payment plans as quickly as possible.

50. **Mr. Zellenrath** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union and supported by **Ms. Onisii** (Romania), said that requests for exemption under Article 19 should be treated with seriousness and circumspection. Member States must find the right balance between rigour, which required that assessed contributions should be paid on time, and understanding, when one of their number failed to meet that obligation due to conditions beyond its control. While the European Union supported the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions, it considered that normal procedures must be followed in all cases and that there must be solid justification for exceptions to that rule. In that regard, it was surprised that Georgia had not submitted its request to the Committee on Contributions in due form, as it had the previous year. Nevertheless, since that Member State had made an initial payment, albeit belatedly, it agreed that its request for exemption under Article 19 should be granted, provided that it submitted a multi-year payment plan as soon as possible. While the European Union was acting in a spirit of cooperation, that did not mean that it was prepared to agree to any subsequent departure from the established rules.

51. **Mr. Torres Lépori** (Argentina) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statements made by the representatives of Qatar and Brazil and that it supported the request by Georgia. He reaffirmed the important role played by the Committee on Contributions.

52. **Mr. Wins** (Uruguay) said that, as a developing country, Uruguay felt solidarity with Member States facing the same difficulties it did. None of those States should lose their right to vote because of the difficult circumstances with which they were confronted. His delegation supported the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions concerning the requests for exemption under Article 19. It also believed that a decision could be taken on the request by Georgia at the current meeting; that would make informal consultations on the matter redundant.

53. **Mr. Stoffer** (United States of America) emphasized the vital role played by the Committee on Contributions, recalling that his delegation had supported General Assembly resolution 54/237 C, and endorsed the recommendations of the Committee concerning the requests for exemption under Article 19. He noted with satisfaction that most of the States on the list considered by the Committee on Contributions had followed the established procedures when submitting their requests, although at least one of them had not. With regard to the request by Georgia, his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. It was aware of the difficulties facing the new Government of Georgia following the revolution at the end of 2003, and it agreed that its request should be granted, provided that, in future, it followed the established procedures for submitting requests under Article 19.

54. **Mr. Al-Eryani** (Yemen) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and that it supported the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions concerning the requests for exemption under Article 19.

55. **Ms. Baroudi** (Morocco) said that her delegation aligned itself fully with the statements made by the representative of Qatar and the other speakers under the item. The Organization's expenses should be borne by the Member States. Clearly, the countries that had requested exemptions under Article 19 were experiencing special difficulties, and it was the duty of those States that were able to pay their assessed contributions to respond favourably to the requests.

56. **Mr. Mazumdar** (India) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar and that it supported the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions. Depriving Member States of their right to vote because they were not able to pay their assessed contributions within the specified time amounted to reducing the weakest States to silence. The case of Georgia was pressing, and the request for exemption submitted by that country should be approved. On the other hand, Member States that were able to pay their assessments should do so on time.

57. **Mr. Kozaki** (Japan) endorsed the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions. With regard to Georgia, he fully supported the statements made by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union and the representative of the United States. It was regrettable that Georgia had not followed the usual procedures. But it had made a payment, and its request for exemption should therefore be granted. He trusted that Georgia would follow the existing procedures in 2005.

58. **Mr. Pulido Léon** (Venezuela) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statements made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the representative of Brazil on behalf of the Rio Group and the representative of Trinidad and Tobago, whose comments had been particularly pertinent. While he was convinced that the existing procedures with respect to requests for exemption under Article 19 should be respected, he noted the goodwill demonstrated by Georgia, which had paid a larger amount than that required. He fully supported the proposal of the representative of Uruguay that the Committee should take a decision in a formal meeting, rather than in informal consultations.

59. **Ms. Samayoa-Recari** (Guatemala) said that her delegation aligned itself fully with the statements made by previous speakers, in particular, the statements made by the representatives of Uruguay and Venezuela. It endorsed the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions and supported the request for exemption submitted by Georgia. A decision should be taken at the current meeting.

60. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) said that her delegation wished to express its wholehearted sympathy for Georgia, which was experiencing a painful period in its history, and to support its request for exemption under Article 19. She noted that all the delegations present were of the same view and called on the Chairman to take a decision on the proposal made by the representative of Uruguay.

61. **The Chairman** said that there did appear to be a consensus among the delegations present.

62. **Mr. Al-Ansari** (Qatar) said that his delegation wished to request a brief suspension in order to seek the views of the members of the Group of 77 and China on the matter.

The meeting was suspended at 12.05 p.m. and resumed at 12.15 p.m.

63. **Mr. Al-Ansari** (Qatar) said that he had now consulted with the members of the Group of 77 and China. They supported the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions and wished the request made by Georgia to be granted. They agreed that a decision on the two issues should be taken in a formal meeting.

64. **The Chairman** thanked delegations for their constructive comments and for the flexibility they had shown. He took it that there was a consensus in favour of granting exemptions under Article 19 to those countries that had requested them in the proper manner and also to Georgia. If there was no objection, he would request the secretariat to prepare a draft resolution on which the Committee would take action at a later date.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.